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PREFACE.

WERE the ſtudies of polite literature conſidered as amuſements only, they would be acknowledged, nevertheleſs, to be of the moſt virtuous and agreeable kind. "Theſe ſtudies," ſays the Roman Orator, "are the nutriment of youth, and the delight of old age; the ornament of proſperity, and our refuge, our conſolation in adverſity; an inexhauſtible ſource of ſatisfaction at home, and not impediments abroad: they cheer us in the night, and accompany us in our rural retreats, or more diſtant excurſions."

What Tully ſays of Literature in general, may, without impropriety, perhaps, be applied to all Periodical Miſcellanies, when conducted with that attention to virtue and decorum, which is ever indiſpenſable. The young ſcholar is no longer obliged to explore myſtic columns, as in the remoter ages of antiquity; nor to wade through venerable tomes, as was his fate only a century or two ago. The portable ſize and eaſy price of a Magazine, are calculated to furniſh the various pleaſures of reading to every time of life, and every order of ſociety.

The preſent age, moreover, is particularly happy in all the advantages of enquiry, long purſued with unremitted ardour, and approaching, comparatively, to perfection. To the labours of their predeceſſors the Wiſeſt have been indebted; and if, in the rich harveſts of Knowledge and Pleaſure, which ſucceſſive cultivation has produced, the Conductors of Periodical Publications are not diſtinguiſhed among the more celebrated reapers, they may yet hope, that their gleanings have been neither uſeleſs nor inſignificant. They may be allowed, therefore, though at a modeſt diſtance, to tread in the footſteps of a Socrates and an Addiſon, of whom it has been obſerved, that they brought down Knowledge from thoſe heights that were acceſſible only to profeſſed ſcholars, and placed it within the reach of all, who, to natural and common ſenſe, added the advantage of a common education.

What portion of ſatisfaction we may derive from theſe conſiderations, may be imagined from the conſtant patronage we have experienced, during the publication of Seventy-ſeven Volumes. Veterans in the ſervice of the Public, we have ſeen rival veterans either advancing their price, or retiring from the conteſt; while new competitors have emerged, fluttered awhile in ſunſhine, like the gaudy inſects of a ſummer day, and ſunk for ever into inſignificance and oblivion; affording a ſalutary leſſon to all literary adventurers, not to inſult the good ſenſe of the Public, by thoſe arrogant and abſurd pretenſions to ſuperiority, which generally terminate in the moſt wretched execution.

Our undeviating view has been to unite the uſeful to the agreeable; to enrich our Miſcellany, not merely with the tranſient topics of the day, but with ſubjects calculated to afford perpetual pleaſure and inſtruction. Not to mention the various arts, ſciences, and trades, deſcribed in the courſe of our publication, and illuſtrated with ſuitable Plates; nor the Maps of almoſt all the countries in the world; which both together include the moſt uſeful information of a Cyclopædia and an Atlas; we have been attentive to digeſt ſome ſubjects of greater importance, in the regular form of hiſtorical narrative. The Hiſtory of the great American Revolution, in particular, was commenced in our Magazine for October 1776, continued occaſionally ſince, and concluded in our Magazine for December laſt; having been enriched with Maps of the Seats of War, and of all the American Colonies, Plans of Towns, &c. &c. Nor muſt we omit to mention a complete Account of Captain Cook's laſt celebrated Voyage, compriſed in fifteen Numbers, embelliſhed with a Chart of the Diſcoveries, a fine Head of that great Navigator, and other intereſting Copper-plates; nor an accurate Hiſtory of the late memorable Siege of Gibraltar, in three Numbers, finiſhed in our laſt Supplement. In our Biographical department, moreover, we have ever preferred the inſtructive Lives of Men of Literature and Science: and our ſtudious Readers may perceive, with ſatisfaction, a pleaſing enquiry into ſome of the moſt ſtriking phænomena of Nature, in a ſeries of Eſſays, entitled, "The Contemplative Philoſopher."

Attentive, thus, to anſwer the moſt important ends of publication; happy in the ſucceſs with which we have hitherto been honoured, and grateful for the candour and indulgence of our numerous Readers and Correſpondents, we have only to add, that as it is our greateſt pride and pleaſure to enjoy their approbation, our unceaſing endeavours will be exerted to deſerve it.

The